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Christobel

A Legend Of Crystal

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Crystal's praises had long been sung,
In the chanting rythm of Indian tongue.

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No.

Christobel

Centuries before an Indian Maid,
Lounged 'neath White Birch leafy shade,
Or sang love songs, weird and wild,
And chanted lullabys to her dark faced child;
Long ere Indian braves came running,
Or followed the deer with artful cunning,
Crystal Lake had peacefully slumbered
Years so long as to be unnumbered.

Pontiac there had set his wigwam,
With many warriors, thru storm and calm,
Holding council with the pale-face,
Long ere cabins graced the place.
Many camp-fires would dot the shore line—
And before the wigwams brightly shine,
Flickering nightly in fitful gleaming,
'Crost the waters brightly streaming.

And the Lake, a surface of glossy lustre,
Smooth, unrippled, when no breeze carest her,
Snug 'neath the bluff or wooded headland,
With wave washed beaches of continuous sand.
Cooling the breeze from off the meadows
With surface a mirror for her shadows,
Lay Crystal Lake, in her cradle deep,
While pine laden breezes lulled her to sleep.

Where simple cottages upon the shore,
Oft' house in comfort a dozen or more.

Then the Pale-face, increasing in number,
Where the Crystal waters peacefully slumber,
There builded cabins upon the shore,
To enjoy its beauties all the more.
They felled the trees; by unceasing toil
First planted Maize in Montcalm's soil.
Then soon, a number of cabins stood,
Underneath the bluff, 'tween lake and wood.

Full many were the tales of lurid hue,
Bespeaking the misery the pioneer knew;
Of the artful cunning and the treachery,
When the red-men strove for mastery;
The war-whoops, ringing on an inky night,
The untold horrors of an Indian fight;
The death of brave men, unknown to Fame,
The Heroes who were counted among the slain.

So Crystal's praises had long been sung,
In the chanting rythm of Indian tongue;
And white men extolled her praises true,
And children's children sang them too.
And midway in the lake's soft shimmer,
The White Birch on an Island glimmer,
Nodding a welcome across the waves,
Which still, the shore line, gently laves.

And on the Island, and nearly hidden,
From the sight of folks unbidden,
A stranger then, was a cabin raising,
And building on lines almost amazing.
Hewing out logs of large dimension;
Planning comfort and ostentation;
A home of logs, but palatial true,
Compared to the cabins that Crystal knew.

Then, in later years, many people came,
To whom the Indian was but a name,
A tradition of a long gone day,
The Mythology of another century.
The hunting grounds of Indian braves,
Are now yellow fields of waving Maize,
The Hunted Fox, the Deer and Bears,
Have long been driven from their lairs.

When a young man, resting upon the green,
'Neath Silver's bluff, gazed on a scene,
Which unfolded before his wandering eyes,
That he dreamed was a part of Paradise.
The setting Sun, like a sphere of Gold,
Which limpid lay in a jewelled mould,
Was gradually vanishing from his sight,
Far off in the gloaming of a summer's night.

'making a home erstwhile
Deserving of Psyche's sweetest smile.

Then a scimitar Moon came into view,
Outlined in silver on a dome of blue,
And cast a shimmer, a reflected ray
From the bosom of the lake not far away.
Sweet's Cottage, shadowy 'neath the trees,
The moan of a night wind, rustling leaves,
A glimpse of something, or perhaps a sound,
Gently lulled his senses to a rest profound.

Sub-concious, he had found surcease
Of weariness; and at perfect peace,
With eyes half closed, his mind was free
To wander and roam, perspectively.
And his mental vision followed the shore,
Dreamily noting its every point once more,
Tho' the Island Mystery, its present and past,
Firmly held his wandering thoughts at last.

There, perhaps a mile away, or more,
But plainly visible from the shore,
The Island held his attention true,
The moment it came to his mental view.
The Island, why just an acre or so,
A wooded spot in the lake, you know,
A beautiful picture in its frame so rare
Of glistening silver and Birches fair.

And snuggled beneath the mammoth trees,
Which swayed with every passing breeze,
A fine Log Cabin could be plainly seen,
Across the water's glassy sheen.
Low and rambling, and cozy withal,
With mammoth chimney outside the wall,
Indicating a fireplace that, deep and wide,
Must fill the end of a room inside.

'Twas somewhat old fashioned that he knew,
A quaint, pleasant home, with a Portico
Covering a walk to the kitchen near,
Which, entwined with vines, was passing queer.
The grand old Oaks and White Birch trees,
Transplanted shrubs with velvety leaves,
With the Oleander and the Violet blue,
While Hyderangeas by the south side grew.

Tho' the cabin was 'most hid from sight,
He studied the same thru the clear moonlight,
Watching the waves as the waters play,
On the shore line, but a mile away—
Watching the shore of The Island fair,
Wondering what mysteries were hidden there,
What manner of folks chose there to stay
Secluded and quiet from day to day.

Crystal Lake had peacefully slumbered
Years, so long, as to be unnumbered.

He imagined full many curious tales,
Romantic experiences, of sorrows' wails —
Of imprisoned maidens in dungeons deep,
Praying to God for the last, long sleep.
Or, a Piratical nature that seeks surcease
From the commonplace of a restless peace,
And hides away from all human eyes
To dream away life in this Paradise.

Or one with a mind that has gone asleep,
Knowing not how to laugh or to weep;
Whilst the body lives on in earthly vales,
Unmindful alike what condition prevails.
While the physical being is chained inside,
The Mental Perceptions, all, have died,
And nothing is left but the breathing shell
That had housed a mentality for a spell.

Or a faint hearted lover, forlorn, alone,
Might make the Island Cabin his home,
And erstwhile dream away long, gray days,
Trying to forget Life's sorrowful ways.
Or perhaps the cabin, under the trees,
Houses Happiness supreme, if you please.
The Newlyweds, who, in their selfishness,
Are enjoying there, alone, their happiness.

He wondered, pondered and conjectured long,
On the possible occupants; and right or wrong
Continued surmising in a casual way
Deducing new theories as thoughts came in play
Till, full of imagination's uncontrollable lure,
Unable to restrain, or to try to cure
A passion to solve this quaint mystery,
He resolved to learn all its history.

So, on this night, as he lay a dreaming,
His every faculty deep in scheming,
Over methods by which he might secure,
The secrets which made the Island Lure,
He swiftly rowed, with muffled oar,
Till the boat's prow grated on the shore,
And he listened intently as a gentle breeze,
Softly laved his brow or rustled the leaves.

He gazed longingly at the cabin nigh;
Then, drawing his boat up, high and dry,
Silently studied the conditions there,
While noting with pleasure its beauty fair.
Bright moonbeams played from without the sky,
Casting great shadows far and nigh;
And a night bird sounded a note so shrill—
It seemed to make his heart stand still.

He followed the beach along the shore,
Back to the boat. This circuit o'er
And no sign of life there being found,
He began another circuit around—
This time nearer the cabin than shore,
And hesitating a moment near the door:
Then gaining courage, curiosity uncontrolled,
Toward the cabin presently, he strolled.

He stepped upon the broad porch floor,
Placed a cautious hand on the knob of the door;
Which opened wide at the slightest turn;
He followed an instinct, which made him yearn
To further explore this silent home,
He had ruthlessly invaded all alone.
So he stepped within, and with caution strained;
Made sure of an exit easily gained.

He directed the gleam of a small flashlight
Across the room, where a circular flight
Of stairs, which, he could plainly see,
Were carved from rich mahogany.
His dry-cell lamp again brought into play,
He pressed the button, 'twas as light as day,
And he directed its rays round a room so fair
That he started in astonishment at wonders there.

To the right appeared the fire-place;
In its cavernous mouth, he could readily trace,
The soot and ashes of recent fires,
Which only intensified his strange desires.
He'd explore the cabin from bottom to top,
No bolts nor bars would suffice to stop
Or curb this longing, a curiosity deep,
The secrets of the Island to find and keep.

By the fire-place stood a massive chair,
Upholstered with leather, of workmanship rare,
So large and inviting, it appealed to one,
To rest in its depths of perfection
And upon the mantle stood an old image,
An Ivory God, now yellow with age,
And Herodetus gazed from marble eyes
On the stranger within this Paradise.

Here an alcove, with a window seat,
Filled with cushions; a safe retreat
Should one desire to lie at ease,
Bathed by sunshine or cooled by breeze.
And between the window and the door,
Reaching from the ceiling to the floor,
A beautiful mirror reflected true
An angle of the interior cabin view.

And midway in the Lake's soft shimmer
The white birch on an island glimmer.

On the opposite wall, there hung a case,
Well filled with trophies of the chase,
While antlers with a five foot spread
Were guarding the same from over head,
Upon the wall gleamed a great breast plate,
With helmets and gauntlets, hung in state,
Close by their side, swords and daggers gleam,
With a shield of armorial bearings between.

Above, great beams, now black with age,
Were a true criterion by which to guage,
The artistic sense and temperament,
Of which the cabin was a monument.
Yes, and upon a floor of golden oak
Lay a Leopard skin. All seemed to invoke
Dianna's blessing, making a home erstwhile,
Deserving of Psyche's sweetest smile.

A mahogany table and a chandelier,
With fantastic candlesticks, so queer,
Seemed to carry his thoughts far away,
With memories of a long forgotten day.
To heighten imagination's wondrous lore.
With realities from an unknown shore,
Where the mysticism of some savage race
Vied with the Caucasion's unrivalled pace.

Long standing, whilst in silent amaze
With roving eye did he ardently gaze
At the wealth and beauty, before him there,
Before crossing the room to the circular stair.
He advanced but slowly, and hesitating near
Its foot, became imbued with a peculiar fear,
Of an unknown something that seemed to curb
A desire the upper rooms to disturb.

But smiling at this sudden chill,
He calmed his fears with a stronger will,
And cautiously advanced, step by step,
Flashing the light, as he onward crept.
Upon reaching the hall, he gazed around,
Entranced by all the strangeness found;
The richness and the quaint design
All seemed of another age and time.

There built into, a part of the wall,
Filling the end of the little hall,
A marble cross gleamed in the light,
Which gave the tresspasser another fright.
But he steadied his nerves and glanced about,
Tho' tempted to flee in discomfited rout,
'Till his eye noted light streaming thru' a door,
A moonbeam streaking across the floor.

The Lake, a surface of glossy lustre
Sweet, unrippled, when no breeze carest her.

He advanced to the door, with misgiving true,
He was somewhat nettled and fearful, too—
His knees began to quiver and quake,
His hand to tremble, to shiver and shake.
But hearing no sound, not even the shock
Of the ticking of a tiny mantle clock,
He pushed the door somewhat wider still
And again had occasion for a powerful will.

He found a room with a four poster bed,
With canopied top and curtains of red,
And lying there in an abandon sweet,
Was a beautiful maiden, seemingly fast asleep.
Her wondrous beauty, her flowing hair,
The pretty curves of an arm quite bare,
Her fast closed eyes, with lashes dark,
But, with features rigid, with form quite stark.

Asleep, yea, but to awake no more.
Her soul had flown to another shore;
And all that remained was the earthy clay,
Tho' moulded and formed so perfectly.
An icy sweat now beaded his brow,
His tremb'ling limbs hardly held him now;
He stared at the corpse which before him lay
'Til aroused from his lethargy, presently.

The setting Sun, a sphere of gold
Which limpid lay in a jewelled mould.

How long he gazed, I never knew;
How great his fright I will leave to you;
But this I'll vouchsafe: when all is said,
His sole impulse was to flee, from the dead.
And about to follow this intuitive desire,
With mind estranged and brain afire,
He turned to retrace his steps to find
His passage blocked by a man behind.

Two gleaming eyes searched through his own;
Cold chills reached the marrow of his bone;
No word as yet; nor sound was heard—
No breathing; so fearful, yet absurd;
And there they faced each other's glare
Just at the top of the circular stair;
One awaiting his time in fiendish glee,
The other counting minutes 'till eternity.

Presently, unable to longer restrain
The tension of high strung nerve and brain,
He said aloud, but with faltering tone:
"I say, kind sir, is this your home?
Is this your daughter, who here doth lay
So cold and still in death today?"
But the other deigned him no reply,
And the walls seemed to echo a solemn die.

The electric lamp lay in his hand,
Tho' his nerves would not obey the command
To raise the light and flash it fair
On the man who blocked his passage there.
And so they stood almost face to face,
At the top of the stairs in that eerie place,
Unearthly and weird, ghastly and still,
In a silent combat of will against will.

The stranger raised a cold white hand,
With an authority that seemed to command
Absolute attention; whilst tremblingly
He awaited there just wonderingly.
Then the stranger spoke, quite clear and slow:
"Pray tell me why you disturb us so?
Why come to the Island in dead of night,
Where your authority, what your right?"

Receiving no answer at this time,
His voice was raised in hauteur fine,
And again he spoke: "When all is said
You think you only disturb the dead;
But it is not so, for Her soul is here
Watching and waiting and hovering near;
Guarding her former home so well,
That a decade has not changed the spell."

Where pilgrims yearly seek and find
Surcease from weariness of the mind.

"Christobel lies in her chamber there
Unmindful of human woes nor care;
Tho 'tis but the house, not Christobel,
Yet, she of the spirit doth with us dwell.
The earthy clay, which you have seen,
Will hereafter appear just like a dream;
The fantasy of a badly disordered brain,
The freakish imagination of one insane."

"Christobel and I were Lovers true,
Long years ago; and we never knew
A care nor pain, and the wedding bells
Tolled joyously in our old home dells.
We were happy in each others' love,
And praised the Holy Father up above,
For all of the sweetness of physical life,
And the absence of every petty strife."

"We bought the Island and built this home,
Were living here happy and all alone,
'Till Christobel's soul crept out one day
From the confines of the mortal clay.
And so, for a decade now or more
She has nightly rambled the Island o'er,
Returning to the body oft' and anon,
Whilst I study the strange phenomenon."

"Silenty she stands by her own remains,
Now freed from earthly aches and pains,
And watches for hours in meditation deep,
Her former self lying there fast asleep.
For ten long years this vigil we've kept
And never to my knowledge have I slept;
While I watch the lovelight in her eyes,
As her spirit distains flight to Paradise"

"You Sir, alone, our secret know,
'Twas Christobel's spirit that disturbed you so,
She followed your every step and glance,
While I met you just by happenstance;
And now, I command you to come and kneel
At Christobel's shrine, and there to feel,
The sanctity of a perfect Love,
With Christobel and I and God above."

He silently knelt at the foot of the shrine,
With feelings anything but divine;
And felt a presence, a touch, a feel
That made his very senses reel,
That filled his heart with an awful fear
Of a tangible something, somewhere near,
When the silence was broken, the terrible strain
Relieved by a song with a sad refrain.

Where sweet communion with Nature proves
Her unseen spirit through Crystal moves.

And there, in the somber, stilly night,
Three souls pleaded for respite;
One for release from the mortal clay,
And one for release from jeopardy.
And the spirit, too, made its presence known,
Throwing a spell over that silent home;
Offering a plea, unvoiced, but plain,
For the lonely possessor of this domain.

The shrine held his eye in fixed stare,
When another phenomenon happened there;
The hall was filled with a hazy light,
Dispelling the darkness of the night;
Then came the strangest sound yet heard,
Like the rustle of bed clothes being disturbed.
A long drawn sigh; then a breath indrawn,
As soft as the breaking of the dawn.

On bended knees before the shrine,
The stranger felt that a peace divine
Had settled down o'er the Island home,
For all past sorrows to atone.
Then rising they turned to the open door,
And stranger than anything heretofore,
The spirit stood in human semblance shaped
By a strange unknown dictum of fate.

There, at the door of the fair maiden's room,
But in clearest outline in the gloom,
He traced the form that stilly lay,
A perfection of beauty of mortal clay.
They stood spell bound or entranced,
Whilst moonbeams shimmered or danced
In unchecked glances thru the form
The spirit had chosen to adorn.

The uncanny nature of the thing,
The spirit whisper and murmuring,
Indistinct at first and undefined,
Like the soughing or sighing of the wind
But straining the ear for every sound,
To solve the latest mystery found,
The murmurings became distinct and clear,
Then voicing words one could plainly hear.

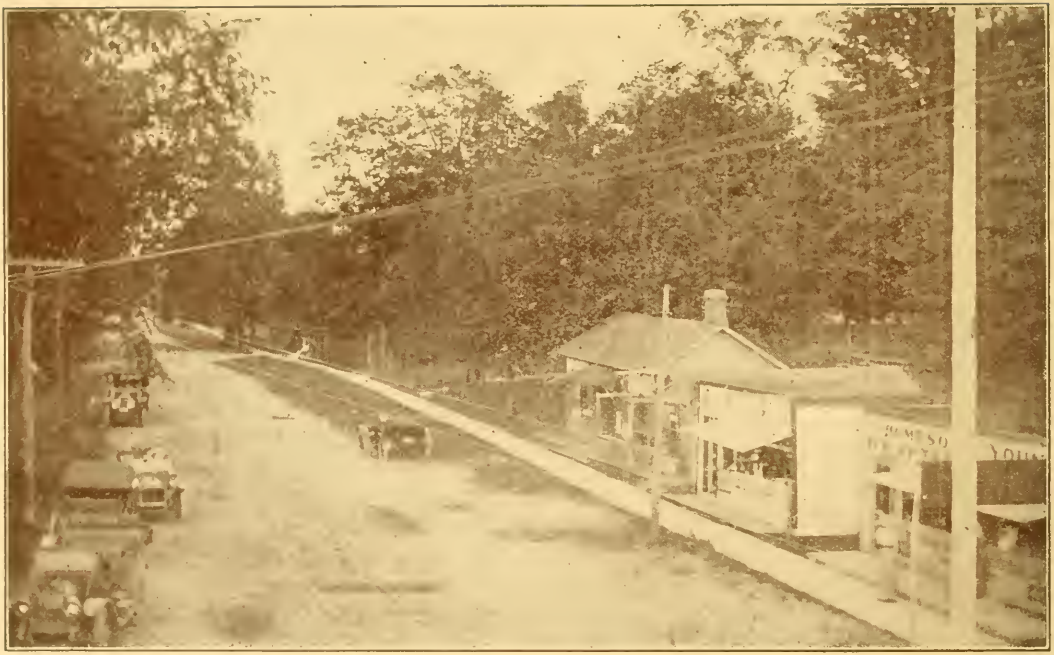
Soft and low came the message sweet;
The life like iridescence seemed to greet
The stranger with a friendly word,
So clear as to be quite plainly heard:
Stranger, leave this house of mine,
And keep my secrets wholly thine,
Remembering, at times, the greatest good,
Comes from things least understood.

Canst thou expect to come and learn
The mystery for which even spirits yearn,
The solemn secrets beyond the pall,
That stills the heart, doth the soul enthrall?
My mission, stranger, is to hover o'er,
To guard and protect both Island and shore
Unseen, Unknown, but forever near,
Working perfections of Happiness here.

So go, stranger—keep the secret well,
And woodland, shore and shady dell,
And Island, all, shall Perfection know,
As unborn generations come and go.
For Christobel will as sponsor stand,
For all who obey her one command.
Trust to Christobel and the Island lore,
And Happiness shall reign on Island and shore.

* * * *

So the Island tradition bequeathing
To a posterity, perhaps unbelieving,
The Love of Christobel and the Myth,
For future generations to conjure with.
For children's children for ever more,
Who wander along Crystal's lovely shore,
To learn of Christobel and fondly dream
Of the guardian angel, there, unseen.



Recollections of Crystal, my fondest dreams,
As memory pictures many delightful scenes.

Now the Island story, as told to me,
May not be true in its entirety;
But yet there seems, to there abound,
A lovely spirit, which hovers 'round,
And watches o'er this lovely retreat,
Filling one's soul with blessings sweet;
That brims the cup with nature's smile,
The weary and heartsick to beguile.

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